

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1                   1.       A method for promoting products with a central server over a  
2 computer network comprises:  
3                   receiving a specification of a promotion for a product from a first computer,  
4                   creating an electronic incentive in response to the specification;  
5                   transferring the electronic incentive to an application server across the  
6 computer network, the application server coupled to a merchant server;  
7                   receiving usage data of the electronic incentive from the application server, the  
8 usage data determined in response to a promotion usage condition indicated by the merchant  
9 server; and  
10                  generating a report in response to the usage data;  
11                  wherein data associated with the electronic incentive is transferred from the  
12 application server to the merchant server;  
13                  wherein the merchant server specifies rendering of the data associated with the  
14 electronic incentive; and  
15                  wherein the promotion usage condition is indicated in the merchant server  
16 when a user coupled thereto fulfills requirements of the electronic incentive.
- 1                   2.       The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive comprises an  
2 offer selected from the group: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get Y free,  
3 solution selling, promotion content.
- 1                   3.       The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive comprises a  
2 delivery method selected from the group: non-targeted, targeted category, targeted usage,  
3 targeted brand, targeted market.
- 1                   4.       The method of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive comprises a  
2 tracking code.
- 1                   5.       The method of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive comprises  
2 calendar data selected from the group: effective data, expiration date.
- 1                   6.       The method of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive comprises a  
2 network computer address.
- 1                   7.       The method of claim 4 wherein the usage data from the application  
2 server comprises data selected from the group: demographic data of the user, a geographic  
3 indicator of the user, a number of products purchased by the user, currency value of products  
4 purchased by the user, a list of products purchased by the user, the tracking code.

1           8.     A method for a merchant server coupled to a client system comprises:  
2           requesting promotions from an application server coupled to the merchant  
3 server;  
4           receiving a description of a promotion from the application server, the  
5 description including pre-conditions and a user benefit;  
6           determining an output representation of the promotion in response to the  
7 description of the promotion; thereafter  
8           transmitting the output representation of the description to a client system for  
9 display to a user;  
10          receiving a selection of at least one item from the client system;  
11          transmitting the selection of the at least one item to the application server;  
12          when the application server determines that the selection of the at least one  
13 item fulfills the pre-conditions, receiving an indication that the user is provided with the user  
14 benefit from the application server; and thereafter  
15          storing in a log a record that the user is provided with the user benefit.

1           9.     The method of claim 8 wherein the user benefit is selected from the  
2 class: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get Y free, solution selling, promotion  
3 content.

1           10.    The method of claim 8 wherein receiving the description of the  
2 promotion comprises receiving the description when the user meets target criteria, the target  
3 criteria being selected from the class: targeted user, targeted user demographic, targeted user  
4 usage, targeted user brand, targeted user market.

1           11.    The method of claim 8 wherein the pre-conditions are selected from  
2 the class: purchase of an item, purchase of a quantity of an item, purchase of at least two  
3 different items.

1           12.    The method of claim 8 wherein requesting promotions from the  
2 application server comprises:  
3           determining a category of items for display for the client system; and  
4           requesting promotions from the application server in response to the category  
5 of items.

1           13.    The method of claim 8 further comprising transmitting a plurality of  
2 items to the client system for display;  
3           wherein requesting promotions from the application server comprises  
4 requesting promotions from the application server in response to the plurality of items.

1           14.     The method of claim 8 further comprising receiving a selection of a  
2 trigger item from the client system; and  
3           wherein requesting promotions from the application server comprises  
4 requesting promotions from the application server in response to the trigger item.

1           15.     A method for an application server comprises:  
2           receiving an electronic incentive from a central server, the electronic incentive  
3 including a pre-condition and a benefit;  
4           receiving a request from a merchant server for electronic incentives;  
5           providing a description of the electronic incentive to the merchant server in  
6 response to the request, the description including a description of the pre-condition and the  
7 benefit;  
8           receiving from the merchant server a selection by a user of at least one item;  
9           determining whether the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition;  
10          when the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition, providing the  
11 merchant server with the benefit; and  
12          when the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition, recording that the  
13 electronic incentive has been used.

1           16.     The method of claim 15 wherein the request from the merchant server  
2 also includes a description of a shopping category of a user.

1           17.     The method of claim 15 wherein the request from the merchant server  
2 also includes an indicator of items previously selected by the user or currently displayed to  
3 the user.

1           18.     The method of claim 15 wherein the pre-condition comprises purchase  
2 of the one item.

1           19.     The method of claim 15 wherein the request from the merchant server  
2 also includes an identifier of the user.

1           20.     The method of claim 15 further comprising forwarding the recording  
2 that the electronic incentive has been used to a centralized server.

1           21.     The method of claim 15 wherein the application server and the  
2 merchant server are co-located.